moving forward (moving in)

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by alainey

Summary

> “Ya got a lot more shit than I realized,” Ed says with a laugh, slightly breathless as he hauls the final few boxes of Luke’s stuff into the living room of their new apartment. Luke looks around the room at the hastily labeled boxes sprawled out between them both, and finds he can’t help but agree.
>
> Or — Ed and Luke are moving in together, and it's strange, new, and exciting.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

“Ya got a lot more shit than I realized,” Ed says with a laugh, slightly breathless as he hauls the final few boxes of Luke’s stuff into the living room of their new apartment. Luke looks around the room at the hastily labeled boxes sprawled out between them both, and finds he can’t help but agree. His old place had been tiny, but he’d accumulated a surprisingly large amount of stuff over the years—a continually upgraded PC and its associated games, various knick knacks given as gifts from past students, free (and somewhat random) furniture items, and the odd piece of cookware. Absently, he wonders if he should have been a bit more liberal in throwing out some of his old stuff, yet as his eyes land on the single box that Ed had brought in with him... he figures it’s not the end of the world to have kept more than he needs. At least until the two of them accumulate a greater number of shared possessions.

“Only when compared to yours,” Luke ribs, nodding towards the single box, and Ed makes a comment about living lightly: an obvious joke, but one that perhaps sits a bit too close to home. After all, he’d still been living on the streets—never remaining in one place for long—before Luke had unofficially invited him to start crashing at his place more often. Their relationship had slowly progressed alongside: from occasional acquaintances, to unlikely friends, to something obviously more than that.

Luke smiles small. The two of them are sharing an apartment now (and, granted, they’ve been ‘together’ for more than a couple years now), so he might as well just call them for what they are: in a relationship—boyfriends, partners. Despite how long it’s been, it still feels strange to roll the words over in his head, and the thought never fails to make him feel strangely giddy.

“This is a crazy amount of space, though,” Ed admits, as he toes off his shoes by the door and steps over to Luke in his socks. His steps are so quiet even on the hardwood floor, and Luke not for the first time marvels at how well Ed has grown into his body. “Even after we empty out all your shit, I bet this place will still look sparse.”

“We chose it well,” Luke grins, and he slings an arm around Ed’s shoulders as they look around the room side-by-side. “But you’re right—it sure is a far cry different from my last place.” Ed grunts in agreement, and Luke grins even wider, because truly—the difference is stark. He’d owned a small studio before (both for how cheap it was, and for the fact that he’d never really had to worry about privacy, back when it was just him) with a tiny bathroom and wide, open windows. He’d gotten it for how close it was to Buckler Academy, having previously favored ease of commute over anything else, and it had served him well while he’d had it.

But now, his needs have changed. And in line with this new stage of his life, their apartment is different, too. Large and spacious, it has decidedly fewer windows than his previous place (a preference of Ed’s—) yet makes up for that with a huge kitchen and even larger bedroom (complete, he notes, with a door). *Their* bedroom, Luke amends after a moment, and smiles just a bit wider.

As it stands, it’s been just over two years since the two of them had first gotten together, a slow and (in retrospect—) completely expected development. They’d found friendship in one another where they’d so rarely found it before—the easy kind, with soft-thorned banter from

one who can take it just as much as they can give—and Luke knows that Ed has pushed him to become a better person: more empathetic, stronger willed, and more understanding as a teacher. Conversely, Luke had given Ed space away from the power struggles of Neo Shadaloo (and, Luke knows, the terrifying reality of his own new life) for just a little bit; a home, a person, a place that he could return to. Luke hopes that he's given Ed many other things too—that he's also helped Ed to become stronger—and as the two of them move into this new stage of their lives, with Ed now at the head of Neo Shadaloo and Luke as a veteran teacher at Buckler... Luke finds he really wouldn't be surprised. His partner has been through a lot, yet he's always made it out the other side.

Luke's lucky to be on that side, with him.

"Ya know," Ed says, and Luke is startled out from his thoughts as Ed shuffles Luke's arm off his shoulder and begins heading back to the boxes, "moving these woulda been so much easier if I'd been able to use psycho power." A purple-tinged box labeled 'Bedroom' floats from one side of the room to the other, nearly directly across Luke's vision, and Ed side-eyes him the same way he always does when using his powers in Luke's presence. Ed knows well why he can't use his power around other people, yet he'll still act like this around Luke sometimes: a discreet sort of test. Luke doesn't really mind (for in some ways, Ed feels like a cat—always double-checking, always re-evaluating, always wondering if this is the moment that Luke will turn), and Luke rolls his eyes as he goes to pick up his own box by hand.

"If only we all had that luxury," Luke replies, and Ed blinks, then snickers. "But have at it now—the more you move boxes like that, the less I have to move my own shit like this." And he's gratified as Ed continues working while Luke does, soft purple light spilling through the room.

Luke wonders if he'll eventually get tired of this expected song and dance; yet he knows that even after all this time (perhaps somewhat similarly to Luke still finding himself flustered by the word 'boyfriend') Ed wonders if Luke's acceptance of his unusual biology is a fluke. And while Luke can understand why—can admit that the circumstances of Ed's life haven't exactly been *normal*—he also knows he's more than come to terms with who Ed truly is, and Luke will make sure he knows that, as often as Ed needs reminding.

He still remembers how adamant Ed had been for Luke to bring his gun 'just in case' on the night of his reveal; remembers how steadfast Ed had believed that Luke would shun him, leave him, curse him in the aftermath. Loving Ed (and proving that devotion) has been continual work on Luke's part, but it's work that he'll always be willing to do. In many ways, it's like teaching—a fair bit of toil, yet for something he cares so much about. And with each bit of progress that they continue to make, Luke finds himself feeling even more excited for their future.

In the end, they make short work of the moving-box organization with Ed helping as he is (especially useful, Luke notes aloud, for moving his damn mattress), and Luke eventually breathes a laugh, looking out over the small piles of stuff that sit near each respective doorway. The bedroom, the bathroom, the living room, the kitchen. And everything else they'd categorized as 'miscellaneous,' piled high in the middle. Breaking down the boxes and

organizing what's inside will be a whole different issue—yet it's one, Luke thinks, that can wait just a little while longer.

"Water?" he asks, and Ed nods, less physically than mentally exerted. Luke roots around in some of the boxes labeled 'kitchen,' finding a wide variety of mismatched cookware before he finally holds up a single cup in triumphant victory. Ed claps sarcastically as Luke graciously thanks him for believing in him, then goes to fill the dang thing in their new sink.

Luke drinks deeply before passing the cup to Ed, who chugs the rest and then refills it. "Shoulda done this sooner," Ed admits with a sigh, and then the two of them flop atop the couch that they'd haphazardly placed against one side of the living room, chatting idly about Luke's stuff as they drink more water and continue to survey their new space.

Eventually, however, Ed sets the cup off to the side and goes quiet.

"Look, Luke," he says, his tone having gone serious, and Luke knows near-exactly what's coming. Still, Ed doesn't quite meet Luke's eyes, still staring out over the sea of boxes in the apartment, and so... Luke waits. "I know you're more used to me at this point—enough to be making jokes about my psycho power, and enough to overlook the circumstances of my birth." Luke opens his mouth to speak, yet Ed shoots him a look, and Luke snaps it back closed. "I've made huge strides in rooting out the remnants of Shadaloo, and in building something new from its ashes. But it's still not completely safe for you, or for me, and for that reason—I need you to know that I'd be happy to leave at any time. I can clear out of your apartment for however long is necessary, and I can do it consistently enough that you won't ever be targeted." He takes a deep breath. "Do you understand?"

Luke's lips are pursed from when he'd shut his mouth before, and he breathes out a slow sigh before replying. "I've told you that isn't necessary, Ed," he starts, and when Ed opens his mouth to protest—this time it's Luke that stops him. "This is *our* apartment, and we picked it so that we could live in it together. I'm not going to kick you out, not even for my own safety, and while I know you're concerned... I've come to terms with all the baggage you carry. No matter how much more of it you might pick up, no matter how much you think I shouldn't: I'll choose you anyway. I want you to be here with me." Luke looks up, and Ed's blue eyes lock with his. "I want you."

Ed's throat works for a moment, then Luke watches the fight in him visibly deflate. He hadn't been looking for a fight in the first place—of that Luke is sure—but he'd needed to know, either way. Luke, as always, understands.

"You're too good for me," Ed tells him, and Luke smiles small. "Just know it's on you if all this comes back to bite ya in the ass." He's trying to levity now, and Luke slings an arm around his shoulder, face pressing into the side of Ed's head, into the soft of his hair.

"Sure, Ed," Luke replies, still smiling, "I've more than accepted that, too."

They continue to chat for a little bit longer, Ed obviously doing his best to lighten the mood, and Luke studies Ed's face out of the corner of his eye, wondering if there isn't more he wants to say. They've been together for a few years now, and while Luke has known for a vast majority of that how much he cares for the other man, it's hard—in the moments

between their deeper conversations—to fully express that. He thinks Ed knows (he has to, after all that Luke has stuck with him through; after *everything* they've been through—), yet there's a vast difference between knowing and hearing, and Luke wonders if it isn't time. He swallows, feels the words form at the tip of his tongue while Ed continues to talk about their next goals with the move-in, then stops. He doesn't want to force this. And so, Luke decides, he won't.

He'll say the words when the time is right, and maybe (in that nebulous future of theirs) Ed will be able to say them back, too.

"Shall we organize the kitchen first, then?" Ed asks him, just barely beginning to stand, and Luke grabs his wrist.

"Actually," Luke says, running the last five minutes of conversation back in his head, and concluding that he doesn't actually want to get back to the slow work of moving in, "I have a better idea."

"The bedroom?" Ed asks, raising his eyebrow, and Luke lifts his shoulder in a half-shrug—already beginning to flush.

"Bedroom or no... I just think we have a few pieces of furniture to break in," he replies. Ed huffs a laugh, and Luke makes a show of looking around. "I think we deserve the break, either way. So what do you think: the mattress first, or the couch?"

"Hm," Ed hums, eyeing Luke in a way that makes Luke flush deeper, "I was thinking kitchen countertop, actually," and Luke's brain stops for a moment, then scrambles to catch up. He's flushing more than heavily at this point, even worse than when he thinks about the two of them being boyfriends—yet he's grinning widely as he nods. Ed finally laughs as well, and as he pulls Luke into a kiss right then and there, Luke wonders how he could have been so lucky to have been allowed this. They're a strange pair—partners, boyfriends, friends, and more—but Luke loves him, loves this, and (in spite of all of Ed's fears) is so unbelievably excited for their future together.

Luke sighs into Ed's deep kiss, blinks his eyes closed as he falls back, and thinks absently: couch, it is. And he really can't complain.

End Notes

I do not go here (and only vaguely know more about Street Fighter now, after doing research for these two), but I did my best to write this fic as indulgently as I could, and very much hope it delivered. Kuro has been a friend of mine for as long as I've been writing fic (back from the old leagueoffics days omg) so being able to reconnect and write something fun for them after all these years was a treat. Much love, Kuro - and I really hope you enjoyed!!

Thanks for reading! As always, you can find me @alainey_lee on twitter.

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